

Ebola Preparation: CDC Provides Delaware Guidance

DOVER – While the likelihood of new U.S. cases of Ebola continues to drop, the lessons learned from the epidemic continue to evolve as Delaware prepares for potential threats from it and other infectious diseases. In partnership with the Division of Public Health (DPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently visited Delaware to offer assistance to DPH, Christiana Care Health System's Wilmington Hospital, and Saint Francis Healthcare on their readiness to identify, diagnose, and treat patients suspected of having Ebola or other emerging infectious diseases.

"The Ebola epidemic was an important milestone in public health development," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, DPH director. "It was a reminder that serious diseases can travel anywhere a plane travels and that there is a very real need to update our infectious disease prevention and containment plans as we prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

In early December, the CDC provided training to DPH staff to "train the trainer" so that the state can provide Ebola and other infectious disease technical assistance to Delaware health care facilities. This is exciting because going forward, the DPH team is well trained in the latest techniques and will be able to provide this service to any health care facility in the state that has an interest. The DPH consultations will start in January 2016 and two facilities already have expressed interest.

Delaware hospitals also continue to work very closely together with the state and one another to prepare for a significant event. "The hospitals have made tremendous strides and have done some amazing work getting ready for a potentially

infectious disease,” said Dr. Awele Maduka-Ezeh, DPH medical director. “Even those hospitals who did not receive a CDC team site visit are learning from the CCHS and Saint Francis Healthcare experience and participating in the larger conversations.”

During the Christiana Care and St. Francis site visits, the CDC team reviewed an Ebola and emerging infectious disease response plan that included:

- Screening for potential Ebola patients
- Transportation of patients to and from the facility
- Safe placement of the patient while in the hospital
- Use of personal protective equipment for patient care and safety
- Staffing of health care providers
- Monitoring of potential for exposure among employees, laboratory testing, room cleaning
- Infection control, waste management, staff training, a communication plan for family members, hospital staff and the community

“Our health system is prepared with protocols in place to safely and effectively identify and care for any patients suspected of contracting Ebola, and to protect our patients, visitors and employees against infection,” said Marci Drees, M.D., MS, FACP, DTMH, infection prevention officer and hospital epidemiologist for Christiana Care. “We greatly benefitted from the Delaware Division of Public Health’s support and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s external evaluation as it helps fine-tune our protocols and confirms our readiness to care for a patient with Ebola or another emerging infectious disease.”

“Saint Francis was the first to respond to last year’s Ebola crisis by offering transport of Ebola patients from any location in New Castle County to Delaware hospitals. The CDC’s visit validated our processes and procedures as best practice

for handling Ebola patients and other emerging infectious diseases; it will help us manage those patients in a direct and forthright manner while protecting our staff and community,” said Wesley Emmons, M.D., FACP, chief of Infectious Diseases at Saint Francis Healthcare.

While the risk of an Ebola outbreak affecting multiple people in the U.S. is very low, it and other emerging infectious disease are unpredictable and require preparation across the health care system. The CDC, World Health Organization, DPH, and state public health agencies across the country are always monitoring for infectious diseases, including most recently Ebola, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, influenza, and antibiotic resistant infections, among others.

Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with a strain of Ebola virus. The recent Ebola epidemic is the largest in history, affecting multiple countries in West Africa and resulting in an estimated 11,300 deaths with 28,600 cases to date. There were two Ebola cases contracted in the United States after two Texas health care workers treated an African man in the end stages of the disease. The two health care workers recovered, while the man died from the illness.

For the latest infectious disease information on Delaware health alerts, visit <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/php/alerts/dhan354.html>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware’s citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.